

**CAPITOL/DOWNTOWN
CENTRAL CORRIDOR TASK FORCE
DECEMBER 19, 2006**

MEETING NOTES

Task Force

Members Present: Larry Englund, Jerry Hersman, Kim Hyers, Paul Mohrbacher, Michael Noble, Susan Rani, Deborah Rathman, Steve Schmidt, Diane Thormodsgard

Task Force

Members Absent: Ta-coumba Aiken, John Bennett, Michael Burns, Rhys Ledger, Craig Lien, Pat Lamb, Phil Mason, Jose Gonzalez, Kristina Smitten

Guests Present: Robert Clough, Karen Lyons, Karri Plowman, Mark Voerding

Staff Present: Margot Fehrenbacher, Al Lovejoy, Paul Mandell, Jess Rosenfeld

Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair Paul Mohrbacher welcomed task force members, who introduced themselves. Guests were also introduced. Karri Plowman, director of the Central Corridor introduced himself and discussed his role in staffing the Metropolitan Council's Business Advisory Committee.

Review of Meeting Notes from December 5, 2006

Staff discussed comments received from Paul Mandell, staff for the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, in response to the December 5, 2006 meeting notes on the Sears site and the League of MN Cities block:

- The point towers on the Sears site would be a big stretch for the Cap Board. The board might consider some height variances, but that what was shown on the US boards would probably go way beyond what the Board would approve.
- The notes also reflect a question about whether there could be a tower on the southeast corner of Rice and University. The max height that would be allowed there is 6 stories; anything higher would conflict with the Capitol dome.
- The task force wondered about whether there could be more green space on the north side of the League of MN Cities block. There are significant utility vaults under the sidewalk there, which is why the League building does not have much landscaping.

The notes for the meeting were approved as written.

Update on Bennett proposal

Al Lovejoy gave a report on the Bennett proposal. The County's report on the Bennett proposal was raised at last week's Ramsey County Board meeting and has been mentioned in the newspapers, even though the report has not been released yet. Public Works suspects that the report will say that the proposed loop increases cost projections, and decreases ridership numbers, but the degree of those effects will not be

clear until the report is made public. The Corridor Management Committee (CMC) will discuss the loop proposal at its January 10, 2007 meeting, where City staff will be presenting on traffic impacts of the proposal.

Kim Hyers asked how much the alignment can still be changed if the Bennett proposal is still being discussed. Lovejoy responded that in his opinion the Bennett proposal was already too late. The confusion about the alignment doesn't look good to the FTA. The question is how the Metropolitan Council will manage the issue. The Corridor Management Committee will probably make a recommendation after its next meeting, and there is a possibility that the County Board could say that the Bennett proposal should not be pursued.

When asked what drives Bennett's proposal, Lovejoy explained that the proposal is trying to address concerns about the cost of relocating District Energy and the distance between the Cedar alignment and the downtown entertainment district. He stated that there are other ways to respond to these concerns. Techniques to minimize the impact of LRT on utilities will be addressed during preliminary engineering. Clear and exciting pedestrian connections to the entertainment district from the LRT are a priority of the Downtown/Capitol Central Corridor Task Force and will be emphasized in the Central Corridor Development Strategy.

Discussion of Key Redevelopment Sites

The task force continued its discussion of key redevelopment sites by revisiting the 4th and Cedar block. The full set of recommendations for the site is below, with new/changed recommendations in italics.

4th and Cedar

- Any redevelopment of the site should be architecturally significant and striking, inside and out.
- Activity on the block is important, so a multi-use building would be ideal (perhaps some combination of office, hotel, and residential uses).
- If an LRT stop is incorporated into the block, there could be an indoor public plaza. Models from other cities (like San Diego) should be explored.
- *A tower would be appropriate for the site. While the visibility of the "1" on top of the First Bank building is important, the market may be able to bear something taller on the site.*
- *Preservation of the Athletic Club is important to consider, but if a substantially improved redevelopment opportunity were presented that would have a greater positive impact on Saint Paul, the city should consider it.*
- *There should be clear walking connections between the adjacent bus stops on 4th, 5th, Minnesota, and Cedar and the LRT stop.*

Union Depot (Diamond Products)

- Because the Union Depot/Diamond Products area is visible from TH 52, what happens on the top of the buildings is important. Green roofs should be explored.
- There is redevelopment potential across 4th Street from Union Depot. Housing or a hotel with a floor or two of commercial may be appropriate. The scale of any redevelopment should fit in with the surrounding buildings.

- Is the children's play space on the southeast corner of Sibley and 4th compatible with LRT? Have other cities had experiences (positive or negative) with play areas being close to light rail stations?

The task force decided to continue its discussion of the Union Depot/Diamond Products area next time, after having time to review the report of the Diamond Products Task Force.

Discussion of Table of Contents for Urban Strategies Development Strategy

The task force reviewed the draft table of contents for the Central Corridor Development Strategy being prepared by Urban Strategies:

- Section 4: Movement principles and recommendations – doesn't mention downtown. The importance of downtown as a multimodal hub and the importance of making connections to other parts of the city from downtown (the West Side, the East Side, etc.) should be emphasized.
- The recommendations of the Development Strategy are divided up between multiple sections (4, 9, 11). Would it make more sense to have one "Recommendations" section to capture all of the recommendations in one place?
- Union Depot is not emphasized enough. It should be highlighted in sections 1, 2, and/or 4.

Discussion of Proposed 2007 Schedule

Staff discussed recent changes in scheduling of 2007 meetings. Task force members will be receiving a new schedule by email. The next meeting of the task force is still scheduled for January 9, 2007.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m. The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 9, 2007, 4:30-6:30 p.m. in the 13th Floor Conference Room of City Hall Annex (25 W. 4th St.).

Respectfully submitted,

Jess Rosenfeld
City Planner
December 20, 2006